



**Neil Dunstan:**

## *It Floats! (And Very Well, Too)*

**S**ince my last notes on the rebuild of the Dehavilland Trojan which I bought on ebay, I had got most stuff ready for a trial run, so when a nice calm day arrived on the weekend, and my wife and daughter were available to help with the launching, etc, I decided to give it a go.

I filled a couple of caddies with fuel and gave the motor a run in the yard beforehand, we then loaded some drinks and a bit of fishing gear (I would never put to sea without a fishing line) and hooked her up to the Commodore and headed off to the ramp at Sarina Inlet.

It was a beautiful, calm day, with the tide near full, so it looked like being very pleasant but I was still really nervous about it all. I don't know why, but I felt as if something would go wrong after all the effort over the last five months – but the day certainly started well. The old girl rolled off the trailer as easily as a tinnie, and in no time we were on the



## *Ebb & Flow... The Trojan Resurrection*

water starting the motor and heading off. So far so good. With the little 50 hp Suzuki 4-stroke ticking over very nicely, we headed out of the inlet slowly to see how she felt; it felt good, and everything was working okay.

Once around the headland I started to give her a bit of throttle and noted the revs and read the speed on my GPs which I had set up on the dashboard. At 2,000 rpm we were doing six knots, 3,000 rpm 9.5 knots, 4,000 rpm 13.5 knots and planing cleanly, 5,000 rpm 16.6 knots and scooting along really well. After this I could not get any more revs from the motor, and as she should peak out at 5,900 to 6,500 rpm it was obvious that she was over propped. This was hardly surprising, as I was still using the prop which was recommended by Steve at Solas props for the Quintrex 4.45 metre Dory, about half the size of the Trojan.

Well, to say that I was stunned by the terrific performance of the little

Suzuki is an understatement, as it was amazing. Imagine, with only 50 hp on a 6.4 metre (21 feet) boat that weighs close to a tonne, she was planing cleanly at 13.5 knots at the sweet spot of the motor and could still make nearly 17 knots flat out! This was much better than I had dared to hope for, bearing in mind that I had primarily set her up as a displacement rig with the vague hope that she may manage to plane a bit at full throttle with a strong wind behind, but I wasn't worried if she didn't, as this was an exercise to see how cheaply I could run a decent sized boat.

After getting over the shock, I went over to a close fishing spot about a mile and a half out, anchored up and spent a couple of very pleasant hours fishing.

Dorothy, my wife who hasn't been out on a boat with me for years, caught the biggest fish, a painted sweetlip around two kilos and was having a great time, with my daughter also getting a number of

good fish - while I caught nothing.

I took the boat back to see how hard it would be to get her back on the trailer and everything worked like clockwork, so much so that my wife remarked that it was easier to load than both the Barcrusher and the Stacer which we previously owned and were a whole lot smaller than the Trojan.

### **Away to the Cape**

A couple of weeks went by, and I was plugging away with the rest of the work on the Trojan as by now the weather had cooled down a lot, and it was very pleasant pottering around in the boat. I built the bunk on the port side which is to be my bunk and made lift up lids on top for access to the storage area underneath. I also fabricated a bait preparation board which I fitted between the uprights that support the rear of the hard top. This is a simple home made unit using a piece of marine ply, a piece of alloy angle and a



*Above: Neil's daughter Nicola holds the boat as the Trojan is launched for the first time. The carefully restored trailer worked extremely well - note the old style (and very useful) push bar under the trailer winch, and further note it is one of the original 'break-back' trailers which have gone out of vogue these days, but is still a very practical and*

*inexpensive way of making a big boat trailer work well. Below: Neil's wife Dorothy does the honours with the, er, 'bubbly' signifying the end of an important restoration chapter and the beginning of another - setting the rig up for living aboard, before getting back to the serious end of the project - going fishing!*





couple of pieces of alloy flat bar for support with some fiddle boards around the side and the whole lot sloping rearwards to drain into the outboard well. It was now time to have a go at staying on board to see what I need to do to make it work as best as I can.

I put a camping mattress on the bunk as I did not want to cut up a new foam mattress until I was sure everything was right, and then loaded her up for a trip to Cape Palmerston, an area of sheltered estuary water about fourteen n. miles south of Sarina.

I had enough food, fuel, ice and water to last a week or so, but I was a bit dubious about the weather prospects. I decided I would play it by ear, and stay out while the weather was good, as I was really anxious to try her out for living aboard. After all, that was one of the main reasons that I took on the job of rebuilding her, as well as the fact that I like doing this stuff.

Off we went on Thursday afternoon with enough time to get down to the Cape before high tide so that I could set my crab pots and get back to my anchorage for the night before dark.

The sea was starting to get up a bit with about a metre of short steep chop but I needed to keep up a reasonable speed so I sat her on 4,000 rpm, and she cruised along at 13-14 knots, planing cleanly and working through the difficult head seas with ease, hardly putting any spray on the screen.

I duly arrived, set my pots and went to my anchorage to prepare my evening meal and turn in around 8pm. The thing I noticed was that I had heaps of room to roam around and put stuff out of the way and the boat hardly noticed me moving from side to side. Very good, so far.

I stayed for four days until the weather forecast was for thirty to thirty five knots of south easterlies the next afternoon for more than a week, so I decided to head off early the next morning before the seas got up any more. I had a really nice time at the Cape except that it was bitterly cold at night so I put on all my spare blankets and closed up each night and it was not too bad at all, especially as it seems as if it was too cold for the sandflies and mossies and I didn't have to light a mossie





coil the whole time.

I got a feed of crabs, but although I caught probably fifty crabs, there were only a few legal sized bucks amongst the small bucks and jennies. This was probably because there were two pro crabbers there as well as some campers, and most of the good crabs had been removed, but I don't mind, as I always pull my pots once I have four crabs to take home. I also got some hooter bream plus a number of excellent sized blue salmon on lures and assorted other stuff.

When taking the big Trojan up the gutters where I usually set my pots I discovered just how big she really is and is not the ideal crabbing boat.

In places where I used to be able to 'to and fro' a bit to turn around, the stem was in the trees on one side of the creek whilst the motor was scrub bashing at the other end! A lot of reversing was required to

get back out of the creek and into the main stream. As I usually go down to the Cape at the most once a month this was not a problem, as most of her work will be out to sea chasing big reds out in the shipping channel between the outer islands and the reef and at which I am confident she will excel.

One other concern I had was that with such an old boat, and even though I had carefully checked the whole hull and repaired any suspicious looking areas, I still wanted to see if there were any leaks in the hull. After four days in the water and pumping out every evening, I never saw more than a couple of litres of water ejected each time. When I got her back on the trailer I opened the bungs and got no water at all so I am pretty sure she is nice and water tight. So much for the people who said that such an old boat that was held together with lots of rivets would leak

like a sieve and would not be able to be sealed properly.

One of the main challenges when putting this project together was to produce a large plate alloy boat which was a good sea boat with plenty of good accommodation at a cost way below the ridiculous prices charged for similar new boats currently available.

The results of the costing are yet to be finalised, but the other objective was to put together an outfit that would be as cheap to operate (in terms of fuel cost, especially) as possible, and have the sea keeping qualities and comfort of a fairly large boat, attributes which it would seem would be mutually exclusive. So far I have not done a lot of sea miles, but on the trip down to the Cape, whilst running at 4,000rpm and 13-14 knots she did about 1.6 n. miles to the litre of fuel,

***Eureka! Check out the smooth, flat wake, as the Trojan happily planes along at 15-16 knots with just the 50hp Suzuki 4-stroke. Neil was over the moon with this outcome.***

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which I was a little disappointed with, but I am sure that after we get the prop sorted to optimise her performance, I can achieve the two n.miles per litre which was my goal when running at planing speed.

So for the return trip back to Sarina Inlet I decided to run the boat in pure displacement mode for the whole trip as was my original idea for low fuel consumption and pleasant travelling at nice slow speeds. With this in mind I set the throttle at 2000 rpm, as I knew from previous experience that if I kept the little Suzuki between 1100 and 2000 rpm she just sipped the fuel and this was her most frugal operating range.



The GPS showed a speed of between 5.5 knots and 6.5 knots so I ran out a couple of my favourite RMG Scorpion lures and sat back to relax for the journey home. The boat was running in a small following sea and I only needed to tweak the wheel every hundred metres or so, and most of the time coming home I was cleaning up or having a cup of coffee except when a two kilo blue salmon grabbed a lure and I had another nice fish to add to the ice box.

After two hours and twenty minutes I arrived back, having travelled seventeen n. miles which included going up the creek to retrieve my crab pots, and then I checked the fuel tank that I was running on to see how much fuel I had used. To my amazement it showed that I had used one eighth of a tank.

This reading was done using the gauge on the

plastic fuel caddie I was using, so it needs to be checked more accurately, but that reading means that she had come home using fuel in the order of 5.6 n. miles per litre - a truly impressive feat for a twenty one foot boat weighing the best part of one tonne.

I will be verifying the fuel consumption figures using more accurate measurements in the future, but when I fit the proper prop it looks likely that we may have achieved the goal that I set out to achieve, namely, getting two n. miles per litre at planing speed and six n. miles per litre at displacement speed in a large, comfortable, safe, sea going plate alloy boat blokes on fixed income or a pension can afford to use to go fishing.

*Neil Dunstan.  
Sarina Beach.*

**F&B**

**Above:** Another shot of the Trojan running sweetly with the 50hp Suzy - and **(Below)** Neil's very happy daughter Nicole pleased the day has gone so well for the family.

